

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As Members of Congress with a profound interest in supporting democracy and human rights in Cuba, we urge you to build on the previous administration's robust policy toward Cuba by placing democracy and human rights at the forefront of your administration's approach. We further urge you to lead a coordinated, global effort of democratic allies and multilateral organizations to stand with the Cuban people as they attempt to rid themselves of the scourge of communist tyranny by an illegitimate dictatorship that has plagued them for six decades.

On July 11, 2021, thousands of Cubans flooded streets in every province on the island with shouts of "Freedom!" and "Enough!," including at the steps of the Communist Party's headquarters in Havana. The Cuban regime responded to these peaceful protests with violence, arbitrary arrests, beatings and shutting down the internet. Numerous videos and firsthand accounts have been posted on social media revealing the perpetration of human rights abuses including beatings by plain clothes officers and live ammunition against unarmed peaceful protesters, denial of medical care for those injured by state security, arbitrary arrests and disappearances of activists including Jose Daniel Ferrer, Guillermo Farinas, and Luis Manuel Otero Alcantera.

We are concerned by the Administration's initial silence followed by a lackluster response to the impassioned pleas of Cubans risking their lives for freedom. Acting Assistant Secretary Julie J. Chung issued two pallid tweets, blaming COVID for the protests while failing to express unequivocal solidarity with the Cuban people in their demands for freedom and democracy. To date, the administration has lacked the clarity that this pivotal moment requires, and have failed to emphatically condemn the illegitimate dictatorship and proclaim the Cuban people's rights to democratic government and human rights that have been hallmarks of U.S.-Cuba policy for most of the past six decades. As U.S. law and longstanding policy have made clear, much more is required beyond the right to "peacefully assemble." All political prisoners must be released unconditionally, expression and independent press, trade unions, and political parties legalized, and free, fair, multiparty elections scheduled. We request your leadership in coordinating a global response condemning the illegitimate dictatorship in Cuba and pressing for fundamental rights, and we would enthusiastically support you in those efforts.

We were also particularly alarmed that your Administration weakened sanctions on Venezuela's oil industry the following day on July 12, rescinding sanctions imposed by two of President Trump's executive orders. Weakening these sanctions provides a lifeline to Venezuela's corrupt

petrol industry, by which the Maduro and Cuban regimes buy influence and tools of repression to subjugate the Venezuelan and Cuban people. Allowing more revenue to flow to these oppressive dictatorships is particularly reprehensible at the very moment that the Cuban people are demanding freedom. This is precisely the wrong direction for a freedom-forward policy. Instead, sanctions should be imposed and rigorously enforced against entities and individuals that do business with these brutal dictatorships.

On the other hand, your administration has many tools to advance a pro-freedom agenda. Under existing authorities, including the Global Magnitsky Act, the State Department could sanction those individuals involved in human rights abuses, thereby freezing their accounts and denying their ability to travel to the United States. The atrocities committed by the regime must have consequences, and the U.S. government must send the united message that those who commit these crimes will be held accountable.

Furthermore, broadcasting to the island and democracy support must be strengthened and increased. Your administration's request of under \$13 million for broadcasts to Cuba is an embarrassingly low number. This funding is equal to amounts provided in the mid-1980s, before the establishment of Television Marti. At this critical time for the Cuban people, and as the regime is blocking internet access, access to outside information in Cuba is critical. The Cuban people must hear from the United States, other dissident movements, and the rest of the world. Toward that end, your administration should be expanding internet access, broadcasts, and information to Cuba, not crippling them.

Your administration has arrived at a crossroads rarely encountered in human history: it may either stand resolute with an oppressed, long-suffering people in their unassailable demands for liberty, or it can continue down the path of weakness and moral equivalency. This is an easy choice. For these reasons, we urge you to abandon plans to weaken sanctions or otherwise legitimize the illegitimate dictatorship in Cuba. Furthermore, within all applicable rules and regulations, we urge you to use the full force of every tool at your disposal, including democracy programming, broadcasting, global diplomacy and sanctions, to rid the Cuban people of the Communist scourge that has stifled them and their democratic aspirations for far too long.

The Cuban people will be free, and they will remember those who stood with them. We hope that they can count on you to stand with them.

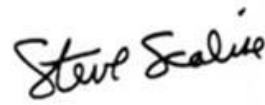
Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader



Steve Scalise
Republican Whip

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio'.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rick Scott'.

Rick Scott
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elise M. Stefanik'.

Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Gonzalez'.

Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Carlos A. Gimenez'.

Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Malliotakis'.

Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maria Elvira Salazar'.

Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex X. Mooney'.

Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress